

## **Water Quality Coordinating Committees What and Why?**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), in conjunction with the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee fostered the creation of committees to coordinate activities at a local level. This was done as part of the State's Non Point Source Water Quality Program.

Counties were selected as the organizing unit for these committees to provide well-defined areas of jurisdiction for the agencies likely to be involved. Each county group was asked to develop a strategy that would guide water quality activities in the county. The NYSDEC and the State Committee provided written guidance to the county WQCCs on developing and implementing these water quality strategies. While this guidance offers suggestions on which agencies should be invited to participate in the committee, no attempt was made to require a particular make up of the committee. The intent was to provide flexibility to each county to determine the exact make up of their committee.

The strategies were to form a blueprint for action in each county. To ensure some level of consistency for the county strategies, the Soil and Water Conservation Committee and the NYSDEC came up with a set of minimum requirements. At a minimum, county strategies needed to include:

- A mission/purpose statement
- A list of prioritized water quality problems or concerns
- A description of the committee's role in implementing the strategy

Small grants encouraged county Water Quality Coordinating Committees to develop their strategy and then to implement some elements of it. Initial grants of \$4,750 were made available to every county. Fifty five of the fifty-seven eligible counties completed their strategy in time to qualify for this initial payment.

In subsequent years, smaller sums have been made available to counties, \$2,500 in FY94 and, in FY95, grants of \$4,000 in two tiers. Using FY96 funds, grants of \$1,000 were available for every county. Additional grants of up to \$7,500 per county have been made available on a competitive basis.

Most of the above text was copied from "Non Point Source Management Program, 1997 Update" October, 1997, Prepared by NYSDEC. Thanks to Matt Gillette, Region 8 NYSDEC for providing this information.